United Nations ST/IC/2007/42

Secretariat

22 October 2007

Information circular*

To: Members of the staff at Headquarters

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management

Subject: **Language and communications programme at Headquarters — 2008**

1. Language courses in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are organized in order to promote linguistic balance and multilingualism within the Secretariat and to improve the language capabilities of its staff as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolutions 2480 B (XXIII), 43/224 D and 50/11. The purpose of these courses is to provide staff members with the opportunity to learn the official languages of the Organization and to use them in their work. To further enhance the ability of staff members to perform their jobs with greater competence and to expand their linguistic skills for professional development, special courses that concentrate on a specific area of expertise, such as drafting or presentations, are offered.

2. The purpose of the present circular is to advise staff members of the registration dates and schedules for the United Nations language and communications programme at Headquarters.

I. 2008 course calendar

3. The 2008 course calendar is as follows:

(a) *January 2008 term*

Language classes:	7 January-28 March
End-of-term examinations:	31 March-4 April

(b) *April 2008 term*

Language classes:	21 April-11 July
End-of-term examinations:	14-18 July

* Expiration date of the present information circular: 31 December 2008.

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(c) *September 2008 term*

Language classes:	8 September-28 November
End-of-term examinations:	1-5 December

II. Registration

4. The registration schedule for language and communications courses is as follows:

(a) *Registration for the January 2008 term*

29 October-9 November 2007

(b) *Registration for the April 2008 term*

25 February-7 March 2008

(c) *Registration for the September 2008 term*

9-20 June 2008

25-29 August 2008

Registration procedure

5. New participants may enrol for a language course during the registration period in room DC2-200, between 10 a.m. and noon, or in room S-606, on the 6th floor of the Secretariat building, between 1.30 and 3.30 p.m. Those who have some prior knowledge of the language they wish to study must make an appointment for a placement test when they register. Students may not register for more than two courses (one regular or accelerated course and one special course or two special courses) without the permission of the coordinator.

6. Once registered, participants will be given an opportunity in class, before the end-of-term examination, to renew their registration for regular courses in subsequent terms. Participants are advised that, if they fail to register at that time, they may be dropped from the programme unless they have submitted a written explanation of their special circumstances to the appropriate language coordinator.

7. All participants, whether new or continuing, who wish to take part in regular classes or special courses must register in room S-606 or room DC2-200. In the case of special courses, if a specific one is oversubscribed, priority will be given to staff members and applicants who have not taken the course before.

8. Returning participants who have been absent from a course of study for two terms or more will be required to take a placement test in order to re-enrol in the programme.

Language of study

9. Prospective participants are advised to exercise particular care in choosing the language in which they wish to take either a regular or an accelerated course, as they may register for only one such course each term and may not interrupt a course of study in one language in order to begin studying another without the prior authorization of the Staff Development Officer (Multilingualism) of the language

and communications programme. Students in the programme must write to the Staff Development Officer to request such a change.

Notification of enrolment

10. Staff members and other participants whose registration is current or who have enrolled during the designated registration period should check the class lists, which will be posted on the 6th floor of the Secretariat building, in the SA-B classroom area and on the 2nd floor of the DC-2 building during the week before the beginning of each term.

Cancellation of registration

11. Participants who believe that they will be unable to complete the course in which they are enrolled and wish to withdraw must do so by completing the change-of-registration form in room S-606 between 1.30 and 3.30 p.m. within the first two weeks of the term. If those students wish to re-register for the same course in a subsequent term, they must do so in person during the designated registration period. Paying participants who cancel their registration after this two-week period will be considered participants for the term and will be charged the full fee for each course in which they have registered (i.e., no tuition fees are refunded after the second week of classes). Furthermore, they will be treated as repeaters when they register for the same course in a subsequent term. A student who attends more than 75 per cent (9 of 12 weeks) of the classes but fails the end-of-term exam or prefers to repeat the level may have the repeater's fee waived. In the case of special courses, as long as a student has attended more than 75 per cent of the classes, he or she may repeat the special course as long as there is space available. A student who attends less than 75 per cent of the special course may not re-enrol the following term unless the absences were due to illness (certified) or an unplanned mission, for which an explanatory note from the supervisor is required.

12. Rates applicable since 2006 are as follows: five-hour courses, **$550**; four-hour courses, **$500**; three-hour courses, **$450**; two-hour courses, **$300**; and one-hour courses, **$150**.

III. Language courses

13. Three types of language courses are offered each term: regular, accelerated and special. In addition, the language and communications programme designs and conducts special job-related language courses to meet specific language needs at the request of departments.

Regular courses

14. Regular courses meet for one-hour periods, three or four times a week, depending on the level. Regular courses offered in the evenings meet twice a week for 1 1/2 hours. Classes are offered at the following times:

Before work:	8.30 a.m.
Lunch hour:	12 noon, 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.
After work:	5.45 p.m. (6.15 p.m. during the General Assembly session)

A pilot project will be conducted by the French programme in January 2008 whereby some courses will be offered at different times (e.g., 11.30 a.m.) and/or for different durations (e.g., 2 hours twice a week). Additional information or details are available from the French language coordinator.

15. Not all levels of a given language are offered at each of these times. Draft schedules, posted in room S-606, should be consulted at the time of registration. Every effort will be made to place registrants according to the time preferences they indicate; however, since the number of places in lunch-hour courses is limited, there is no guarantee that registrants will be given the time they have chosen.

Accelerated courses

16. Accelerated courses are offered as an intensive alternative to the regular programme. Classes meet five days a week from 8.30 to 9.30 a.m.

IV. Special communications skills

17. Special courses have been developed to address the need of the Organization for staff members to develop their communication skills for work-related purposes, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the strategy for the management of the Organization's human resources and other human resources management issues (A/59/263).

18. The writing skills component of the communications programme addresses the need to improve the drafting expertise of staff members whose functions require them to draft in a working language of the Organization. Writing workshops, which include courses in drafting letters and memorandums (English and French) and report writing, may take place from 3 to 5 p.m. or from 5.45 to 7.45 p.m. (6.15 to 8.15 p.m. during the General Assembly) one day a week. In addition, presentation skills courses (English and French) are offered to develop the ability of staff members to speak more effectively before groups. Special language workshops that enable participants to focus on and improve their abilities in specific skill areas are offered on a rotating basis. At the time of registration, participants may check which workshops are available in the language they wish to study.

19. For a description of these courses, staff members are requested to consult the Staff Development Programme site of the Office of Human Resources Management (http://iseek.un.org/m210.asp?dept=551) on the United Nations Intranet under the heading "Learning Section/Staff Development Programme Descriptions" or the Staff Development Programme booklet.

V. Additional information

Lunch-hour attendance of language courses

20. Supervisors are requested to permit staff members who attend classes during their lunch hour 20 minutes for a quick meal before resuming their work.

Absenteeism

21. Participants are advised that those who fail to attend class during the first week of the term will be dropped from the class list and that their places may be allotted to persons on the waiting list unless they have informed the language coordinator in writing. Absences from class during the term should be explained in writing to the appropriate language coordinator.

Course materials

22. Participants will be informed on the first day of class of the materials that will be used during the course. Textbooks assigned for specific language courses may be available for purchase under special arrangements with vendors or in the United Nations bookshop, located in room GA-032A in the General Assembly building. Language coordinators will advise students how to obtain course materials.

End-of-term examinations

23. Examination schedules are posted during the last month of classes. Participants are advised that examinations are an integral and mandatory part of the language programme. Participants who do not sit for the end-of-term examination will be dropped from the programme unless they have submitted an adequate written explanation to the appropriate coordinator in advance of their absence.

24. Examinations are given after the last week of classes for regular and accelerated courses to determine whether a participant will move on to a higher level or repeat the course. The examinations consist of written and oral components, both of which participants must pass to be able to go on to the next level. Participants who fail a course may arrange to have a general discussion of the results of their examination by making an appointment with the appropriate language coordinator one week after the beginning of a term.

25. Participants who are prevented by compelling circumstances from taking the examination as scheduled and who wish to request a make-up examination must write a memorandum to the coordinator of the language they are studying and complete a request form.

26. Participants who choose to repeat a level irrespective of their grade on the final examination should inform their teacher accordingly at the end of the course period in order to be re-enrolled at the same level. A repeater's fee will be charged.

Language proficiency examination

27. The United Nations language proficiency examination is the official test of a staff member's knowledge of a language and may be taken both by participants who have completed the last level of a language course and by staff members who have achieved proficiency from outside sources. The application to take this examination must be made separately. Further details are available at www.unlpe.org.

VI. Enquiries

28. The information desk in the Secretariat building, located in room S-606, is open for enquiries Monday to Thursday from 1.30 to 3.30 p.m. The website address is www.un.org/depts/OHRM/sds/lcp/.

29. The following is a list of telephone numbers to call for information:

Javier Zanón
Staff Development Officer, language and communications programme:
[Number not yet assigned; please consult Directory]

Joyce Lewis-Swensson
Staff Development Assistant, language and communications programme:
212 963 8928

Joseph Vukas
Training Assistant, language and communications programme:
212 963 7056

For pedagogical enquiries or to arrange appointments, please contact:

Samia Montasser, Arabic programme: 212 963 9506

Yong Ho, Chinese programme: 212 963 2481

Carlos Islam, English programme: 212 963 2985

Emmanuel Soyer, French programme: 212 963 7019

Alla Padalka, Russian programme: 212 963 7063

Eva García, Spanish programme: 212 963 7026

Teachers' room (1B-24): 212 963 2188

Teachers' room (DC2-0203): 212 963 2480

Fax machine number for the language and communications programme office, room S-606: 212 963 6016

The office hours of language coordinators are posted outside rooms S-606 and DC2-200.